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LAGOS FOR DEA SGAYE AND LEGAT MJOHNSON

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TAGS: [GH](#) [KWMN](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [SNAR](#)  
SUBJECT: DINNER WITH GHANA'S ATTORNEY GENERAL: NARCOTICS,  
CORRUPTION AND EXTRADITION ISSUES

Classified By: Ambassador Pamela E. Bridgewater for reasons 1.5 d, e.

11. (C) Summary: On July 18, Ambassador, PolChief and RSO had dinner with Ghanaian Attorney General and Minister of Justice Joe Ghartey, at the Minister's request. Ghartey highlighted ministry reforms and assured us the GOG is serious about counternarcotics. He promised to look into updating the extradition treaty and our request to extradite Grace Coleman. He agreed corruption was a serious problem in Ghana. Ghartey also responded to questions about trafficking in persons, prison conditions, and the death of Issa Mobila in military custody. End summary.

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Reforms in the Ministry  
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12. (C) Ghartey enthusiastically outlined his efforts to reform the Attorney General's Department and Ministry of Justice. His plans include increasing staff training and travel, rotating employees, taking personnel on off-site strategy sessions, empowering middle-level managers, and trying to remove distinctions between bureaucrats and staff lawyers. He is making physical improvements to the ministry and upgrading computers. Ghartey hoped the resulting improved morale would help overcome the relatively poor salaries of ministry attorneys. He claimed that as a former lawyer, President Kufuor has a keen interest in these reforms, which Ghartey anticipates will result in increased prosecutions.

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Narcotics  
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13. (C) Ghartey assured Ambassador that the GOG was very serious about combating narcotics trafficking. "Heads will roll," he said, noting that he had recently fired an employee because of his handling of a narcotics case. Ambassador underscored our concern about the narcotics situation in Ghana, noting the Colombian connection, and pointing out the disastrous impact narcotics trafficking can have on a country.

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Extradition Issues  
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14. (SBU) Ambassador praised our excellent cooperation on extradition issues, but highlighted our frustration with so-far fruitless efforts to extradite Member of Parliament Grace Coleman. PolChief underscored the seriousness of the

case against Coleman. Gharthey agreed that a Member of Parliament should not be above the law and said he would look into the matter. PolChief noted our interest in updating the 1931 bilateral extradition treaty. Gharthey agreed that such an old treaty probably needed to be brought into the modern world and said he would look into this further.

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Corruption  
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¶5. (SBU) In response to a question from PolChief, Gharthey explained his ministry's involvement in prosecuting corruption cases. He stressed the importance of raising awareness about the ills of corruption, especially at grass roots levels. He praised the passage of several anti-corruption laws, pointing out that a Whistleblower law is being considered in parliament and that the GOG was working on a Freedom of Information bill. According to Gharthey, at this time, there is a constitutional difficulty in naming a fully empowered head (rather than Acting Director) of the Commission on Human Rights and Justice (CHRAJ), which takes the lead for the GOG on fighting corruption, because the substantive Commissioner is on secondment overseas and has not retired.

¶6. (C) PolChief noted our concerns about financial crime and scams, which Gharthey agreed was a serious problem. RSO highlighted deficiencies in the Ghana Police Service which foster a climate of corruption. Gharthey was hopeful an anti-moneylaundering bill would go to parliament soon. He said we were "preaching to the converted" on corruption issues and he readily agreed to speak at an upcoming PAS program on corruption. Ambassador pointed out that fighting corruption was an important part of keeping our Millennium

Challenge Account compact with Ghana on track.

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Human Rights  
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¶7. (U) For Ghana to move to Tier 1, the GOG must prosecute and convict perpetrators of trafficking in persons, the Ambassador told the minister. PolChief noted that we hope to offer INL-funded training in the next year on TIP for judges, prosecutors and police. PolChief also expressed concerns about Ghana's overcrowded prisons and the large number of prisoners on remand. Gharthey agreed that TIP was a problem. He said the ministry is working on a study and strategy to improve the prison problem. Ambassador asked about the status of the case of Issa Mobila, who was found dead while in military custody in 2004. Gharthey said the case is still under investigation, noting that it may be difficult to ascertain whether Mobila was killed by the military.

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Comment  
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¶8. (C) The purpose for this dinner remains unclear. Gharthey, a 45-year-old lawyer who was promoted from Deputy Minister to Minister in the last Cabinet reshuffle, may have wanted it for self-promotion. He seemed eager to project himself (quite convincingly) as open, youthful, informal, and progressive. The dinner was organized by the local representative of U.S. company Kosmos Energy, who may have wanted the dinner to promote himself as a middle man. The Kosmos rep claimed the minister wanted an informal setting to share frustrations and discuss U.S. assistance in capacity training for lawyers and in fighting cybercrime and narcotics. However, the minister did not ask for training, never mentioned cybercrime, and only briefly discussed narcotics. He was receptive but noncommittal on many issues we raised.

¶9. (C) Given the high profile of our advocacy on narcotics and corruption (and the growing media coverage about

narcotics), we suspect Gharthey may have used the cover of a commercial advocacy dinner to send us a private message, possibly on the orders of the President or someone in the presidency, that the GOG is serious about law enforcement reform and counternarcotics. Lending weight to this theory is the fact that on July 19, Gharthey held a press conference to stress the GOG's seriousness about tackling narcotics. He stated in the event that the GOG would work to ensure those arrested for drug offenses are denied bail until their cases go to court. He also said the GOG was working out a legal framework to destroy cocaine that is seized rather than retain it as evidence. (Ambassador had earlier asked the President to find ways to destroy evidence to reduce the "disappearance" of drugs.) Gharthey criticized the slow pace of narcotics trials and said the ministry had set up a committee to review all court judgments on drug cases. Emboffs have a meeting with the Castle next week to discuss next steps on counternarcotics. This may confirm that Gharthey, who has a good reputation and has risen quickly through the ranks, is to be a key player in a revamped counternarcotics effort.

BRIDGEWATER